SEE
FOLLOWING
NOTE

VOIR
NOTE
CI-APRÈS

PARTS OF THE ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

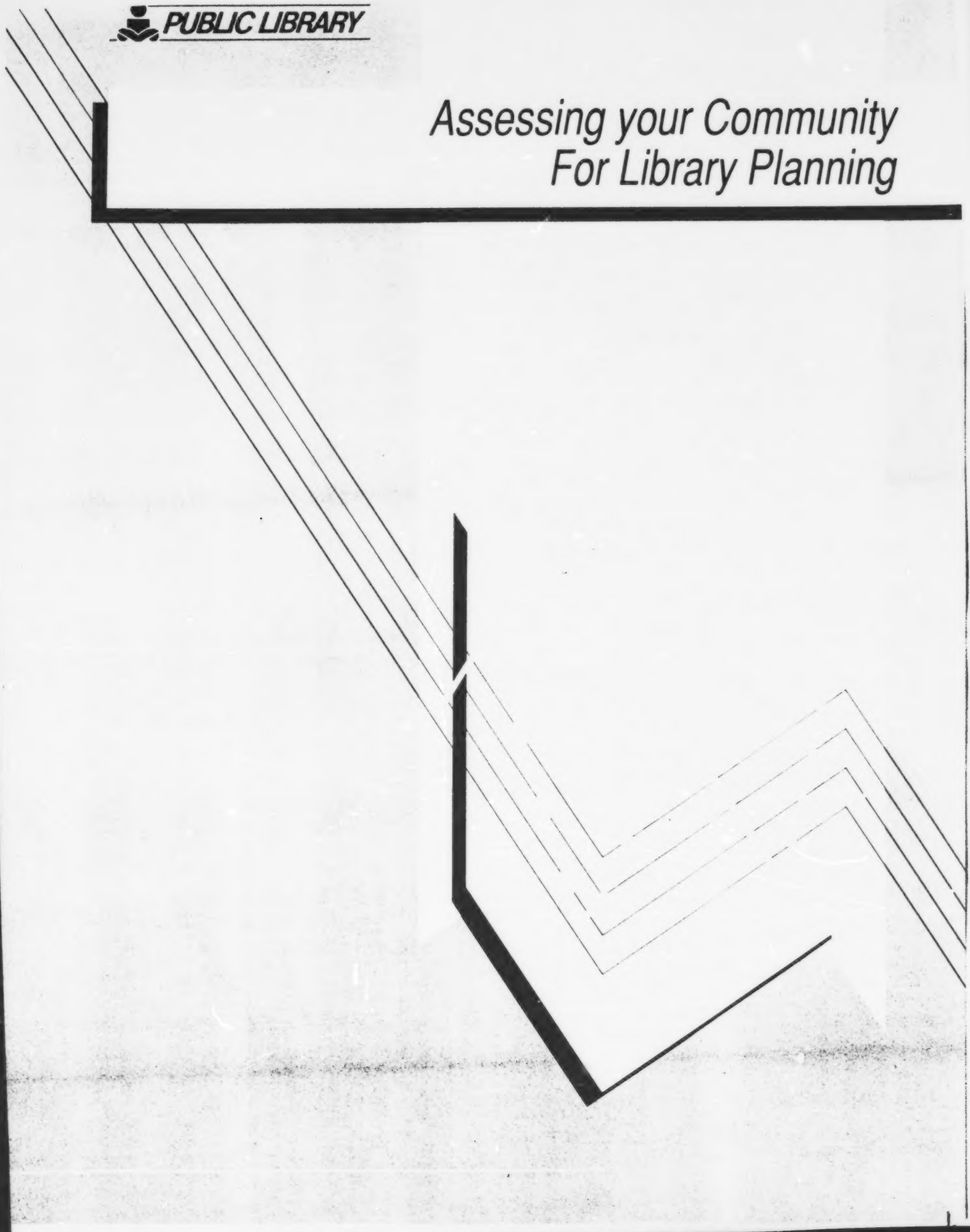
ARE OF POOR REPRODUCTIVE QUALITY

CERTAINES PARTIES DU DOCUMENT ORIGINAL

SONT DE PIÈTRE QUALITÉ DE REPRODUCTION

PUBLIC LIBRARY

Assessing your Community For Library Planning



Published by the
Ministry of Culture and Communications
Printed by the Queen's Printer for Ontario.
Province of Ontario, Toronto, Canada.

©1987, Queen's Printer for Ontario

Copies available from the Ontario
Government Bookstore, 880 Bay St., Toronto for
personal shopping. Out-of-town customers write
to Publications Services Section, 5th Floor,
880 Bay St., Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8.
Telephone 965-6015. Toll free long distance
1-800-268-7540, in Northwestern Ontario
0-Zenith 67200.

ISBN-0-7729-2649-2
D1809 7/87 1500

ASSESSING YOUR COMMUNITY FOR LIBRARY PLANNING

Ontario
Ministry of Culture and Communications
Lily Munro
Minister

It is a pleasure for me to introduce **Assessing Your Community for Library Planning,** designed to assist the public library trustees and administrators in undertaking a local needs assessment for library services.

It is my hope that this manual will assist you in better understanding your community and enable you to develop vital and dynamic programs both for library uses as well as those currently not using your library's services.

Yours sincerely,

Lily Munro

Lily Munro
Minister

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword

PAGE 1 1. What is Needs Assessment?

2 2. Planning and Needs Assessment

4 3. Needs Assessment in Public Libraries

5 4. Steps in Undertaking a Preliminary Needs Assessment

10 5. Approaching User Needs Assessment

11 6. Techniques for Gathering Data

- 11 ■ Planning Sessions with Staff
- 12 ■ Planning Sessions with Trustee
- 12 ■ Internal Library Reports and Statistics
- 13 ■ Internal Library Statistics-Unit Costs
- 13 ■ Ministry of Citizenship and Culture Statistics
- 14 ■ Municipal Data
- 15 ■ Data From Other Specific Libraries
- 16 ■ Development of a Community Information Directory
- 16 ■ Personal Interviews
- 17 ■ Networking
- 18 ■ Surveys
  - ■ In House Surveys
  - ■ General House Surveys
  - ■ Telephone Surveys
- 23 ■ Focus Groups
- 23 ■ Workshops/Seminars/Conferences
- 24 ■ Public Meetings

25 7. Where to go Beyond This

26 Appendices

27 A Survey Questionnaires

30 B Survey Sample #1 Library User Questionnaire

35 C Survey Sample #2 Children's Questionnaire

36 D Survey Sample #3 Special-Interest Questionnaire

37 E Survey Sample #4 Library Hours of Opening Questionnaire

38 F Survey Sample #5 Community Groups Questionnaire

FORWARD

Many of the trends in our society are having a dramatic impact on our public library service. It becomes imperative that public libraries be able to define the nature of these trends in their community and match these with the ability of the library to respond.

Planning is an important obligation for public library trustees and administrators. The **Public Libraries Act, 1984** specifically requires a public library board to provide, in cooperation with other boards, a comprehensive and efficient public library service that reflects the community's unique needs (Section 20.a). Given the rapidly changing nature of our society, planning has become especially critical to service organizations such as public libraries.

This publication, **Assessing Your Community For Library Planning,** is an introduction and a guide for public library trustees and administrators to undertake such analysis and to develop a coherent planning strategy.

This publication was undertaken for the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture by the firm of Fox, Jones and Associates and guided by an advisory committee: **Peter Bassnett,** (Chairman), Scarborough Public Library; **Janet Moss,** Middlesex County Public Library; **Elizabeth Rowland,** formerly of the Richmond Hill Public Library; **Gilles Frappier,** Ottawa Public Library; **Gail Mullen,** Barrie Public Library; **Brenda Oziewicz,** Collingwood Public Library; **Norman McLeod,** Guelph Public Library; **Rosemary Kavanagh,** Ontario Library Services – Trent.

The members of the committee are to be gratefully thanked for their contribution to this project. The continuing support of the OLS – Trent board and staff is also gratefully acknowledged.

A companion publication produced by the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, **Enjoying Research, A 'How To' Manual on Needs Assessment,** is also available and provides further information on research and statistical techniques. Furthermore, building on the successful **Libraries 2000: A Futures Symposium,** the Ministry has developed a workbook and trainers kit to encourage future based planning in Ontario's public libraries. Workshops are being undertaken under the auspices of the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture. Also available is **Building Libraries: Guidelines for the Planning and Design of Ontario's Public Libraries** which employs the planning process in relation to a library's building program.

It is anticipated that these publications, when used with **Ontario Public Library Statistics** and **How Do You Compare?** will assist in planning library services for current and future demands.

Wil Vanderelst
Director
Libraries and Community
Information Branch

WHAT IS NEEDS ASSESSMENT?

Your public library is one of the most important municipal services in the community. It provides cultural, recreational and informational programs for people of all ages and backgrounds.

The role of public libraries is changing. A number of significant pressures have combined to influence this over the past few decades:

- the computer and its impact on society;
- a growing inability of government to finance indefinite expansion of public services;
- the information explosion;
- an aging population;
- new mediums for information;
- immigration;
- structural change in local economies.

Society is changing constantly. For the public library to remain an integral, essential service to the community, the board and staff must be aware of these changes.

The challenge is to respond to each wave of change as it materializes. The problem is that without proper needs assessment research, the library may prematurely respond or respond inaccurately to specific local needs. The cost of error is usually very high.

While not a definitive "how to" manual, this publication will introduce you to the issues involved in needs assessment. This will help you respond to your community's needs in a timely, responsible way.

The province supports the use of needs assessment research as a way of developing library service in your community. The Ontario Public Libraries Act 1984 requires public libraries to survey their communities on a regular basis.

Needs assessment is a process of taking a methodical look at your community. It will help you choose services for the library that meet community needs by telling you more about what people – both users and non-users – think of the library. You can find out what gaps exist between services you provide now and those the public need.

The purpose of needs assessment is to provide the information required to plan effectively. The purpose of planning is to initiate and control change. The world is a dynamic, complex place; planning allows you to stay abreast of that dynamism. The result of your research may help you redefine the role of the library in your community.

This publication contains practical steps to help you establish and understand the needs of your community, to assist you in refocussing some of your activities, and to make a case for services and facilities. It combines explanations of techniques with descriptions of practical steps needed to implement each technique, and in many cases gives a short example.

USE OF THIS MANUAL

This manual is a practical resource for assisting library board members and staff who are responsible for the provision of services and facilities to undertake community needs assessment. It is a basic tool for many different sizes of libraries which will:

- help the board and staff to assess the needs of a variety of individuals and groups;
- enable the board to differentiate between various needs, and determine specific needs;
- assist the board in making decisions on local needs that should be met in the short term and long term.

The manual presents material in a segmented format, so that it can be used in a variety of ways. It is designed:

- to give an overview of needs assessment and public library service;
- to assist you to carry out a preliminary needs assessment review;
- as a guide to using a single research technique or "tool";
- to do a detailed needs assessment analysis.

PLANNING AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

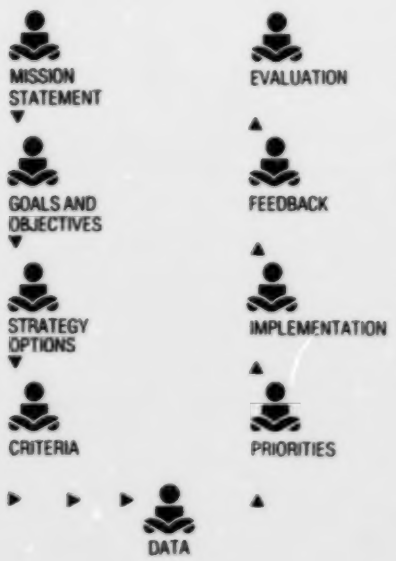
Planning is a cyclical process. It begins with the formulation of a mission statement. From the mission statement, goals and objectives are developed which eventually lead to the implementation of library service. The evaluation of these services eventually may trigger a revision of the goals and objectives and perhaps even the mission statement. For a more detailed look at a library planning process you may want to refer to **Planning Process for Public Libraries,** published by American Library Association.

Needs assessment is a central and vital component of the planning process. To assist you in understanding needs assessment, we have divided the process into a number of parts.

- Mission Statement
- Goals and Objectives
- Strategy Options
- Criteria
- Criteria Matrix
- Data
- Priorities
- Implementation
- Feedback
- Evaluation

Diagram 1

NEEDS ASSESSMENT



DEFINITIONS

Mission Statement
In this statement the board describes, as explicitly and concisely as possible, its philosophical understanding of the library service that it intends to provide to the community for which it has been established. At its briefest, this statement of mission will be an expression of the board's belief in the value of public library service in general, and local library service in particular. The mission statement should remain flexible, and never be regarded as the board's final declaration of library philosophy; therefore it may be changed after periodic review. It is from this mission statement that goals, objectives, policies and procedures are developed.

Goals and Objectives
The board carefully articulates long and short-term goals and objectives. These will help it to refine policy and procedures by concentrating attention on specific chosen areas of organization or service development. Definite goal statements should always be written, together with a time-graduated series of objectives to be met to achieve each goal. The board is then in a position to determine and implement strategies to achieve its interim objectives and long-term goals, and to monitor results.

Strategy Options
Objectives can be pursued in different ways. For example, if the objectives are, among other things, "to serve all areas of the community", this might be done from a central library, or from several branch libraries.

Criteria
Before a choice can be made among the strategies, criteria are needed. These are the lists of factors – quantitative and qualitative – whereby strategies are weighed for attractiveness.

Criteria Matrix
In preparing to make choices among the strategies, it is useful to set up a two-dimensional matrix. Possible strategies are along one axis and the criteria which will be used to judge them are along the other axis.

Data
Each criterion has to have a value before it can be used. For example, if one criterion for siting a new library is the price of each of several possible sites, you have to know those prices. If another is the zoning, you have to know that zoning. These values are the data.

Priorities
Selections of strategy then have to be made. Even when one has complete data, this can be the most difficult of planning exercises. Sometimes, conclusions are reasonably obvious. In complex situations, professional decision-making disciplines exist. Most of the time, a discussion of the available data will enable a judgemental decision to be made.

Implementation
Once services have been chosen, following directly from an adoption among strategies, they have to be implemented.

Feedback
It is an important part of the continuity of the planning process that information on the effectiveness of services, and their success in realizing chosen strategies, is obtained on a regular basis.

Diagram 2

CRITERIA ▶ / STRATEGY ▼	COST ($ PER BOOK AVERAGE)	DURABILITY (MONTHS)	PATRON* REACTION
MORE HARDCOVER BOOKS			
MORE PAPERBACK BOOKS			
MORE PAPERBACK BOOKS BOUND BY LIBRARY			

*10 = VERY POSITIVE
0 = VERY NEGATIVE

Example

Evaluation
Services and strategies should be evaluated periodically, and the following questions answered:

- Are the goals/objectives of the service being met?
- Should the goals/objectives be altered?
- Do the conclusions impact on the over-all objectives of the library system?
- Is the service being marketed effectively?

Needs assessment influences all of the above steps of the planning cycle.

DEVELOPING OBJECTIVES

Let's look more closely at a crucial aspect of needs assessment: the development of objectives. This involves the use of strategy options, criteria, and a strategy matrix. The following example will clarify this concept.

One of the objectives of the library is to acquire more books

Strategy options might be:
- acquire more hardcover books;
- acquire more paperback books;
- acquire more paperback books and have them privately bound by the library into hardcovers.

Criteria for choosing among the strategy options might be:
- cost of the hardcover book (average);
- cost of the soft-cover book;
- cost of the soft-cover book bound by the library;
- estimated durability of the book;
- impact of whether the book is bound or not on its appeal to library patrons.

A Matrix can then be drawn up of the strategy options versus the criterion.

Data can be collected to fill out the matrix (Diagram Two).

Priorities can be determined by discussion of the matrix.

Services (book policies) can be implemented.

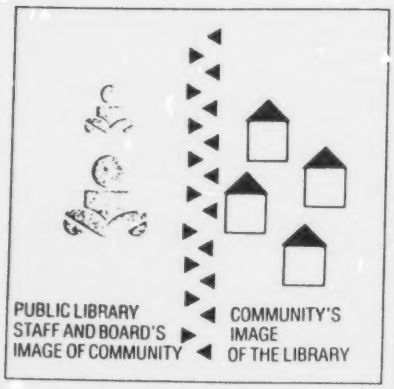
Results of the new book policies can be monitored, in terms of cost, durability and user reaction.

An Evaluation can be made of the selection of the strategy option and the resulting book policy.

Notes

NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Diagram 3



We have looked at the importance of needs assessment, and how it relates to the planning cycle. Now let's look at specific steps in undertaking needs assessment in your library.

Each library board will tend to have its own initial perspective as to the services and facilities it should be providing. This perspective may well change once it receives feedback from the community (Diagram Three).

Once a needs assessment has clarified the needs in the community, the demand for services and facilities has then to be matched, for the most reasonable cost, by supply. In the process, the library board members may change their minds about their goals.

Before you begin a needs assessment analysis, consider the following:

RECOGNIZE THE DIFFERENCES WITHIN YOUR COMMUNITY

Not only is each community unique but each is likely to have a uniquely-defined perspective of and attitude towards its public library system. This attitude is multi-dimensional, and made up of many factors: the history of the community; community traditions; demographics and demographic trends; the attitude of groups; the attitude of individuals; political forces; personalities; the media; pressures and changes within the community; and the perceived prospects for the future. It has roots and also a dynamism.

USE THE RESOURCES CLOSE TO YOU

The library board and staff in any community represent a unique and complex organism, a community of traditions and individual energies and attitudes. Individual cultural entrepreneurs make a library come alive; each individual on the board and staff of the library, each user, has a personal impact on its operation and a personal stake in its success. Each library is tailored to the individual leadership energies that exist within it, and its perception of itself and the community evolve from these.

DON'T POLARIZE

It is most important that a needs assessment process not polarize the community or unduly raise expectations. This affects the way surveys should be done, and meetings and interviews conducted. Communications must be made in such a way that information is obtained without making, or even implying, any changes.

DO PUBLICIZE

It is vitally important that needs assessment processes be widely publicized, with extensive advertising of the addresses and telephone numbers of those conducting the needs assessment, and with a clear message that all input is welcome and will be listened to.

Remember to publicize in formats that allow all users to partake, such as English, French or multilingual users, or the disabled.

BUILD ON HISTORY

The library represents a central part of the history of your communities; this is a strong foundation on which you can build.

STEPS IN UNDERTAKING A PRELIMINARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The purpose of this section is to help the person who is doing the assessment to gauge the **demand** for library services in your community to match (in a preliminary way) with the **supply** of library services, and to determine the implication of this for more thorough needs assessment in certain areas.

This overview of needs involves several key questions:

- What is your community like?, i.e. What is its socio-economic profile?
- What is the basic situation of the library within it?, i.e. Is the library system centralized or de-centralized? Is it recreation/leisure oriented, or education/vocation oriented?
- What are the library's goals and objectives?
- What key issues is the library currently facing?
- What challenges will it face in the near future?
- What must it consider in the longer term?

After addressing these, you should be in a position to arrive at some broad, general conclusions regarding planning in your library.

Needs assessment typically involves the following basic steps:

- Establish your time frame.
- Estimate demand for library services.
- Estimate supply of library services.
- Match supply and demand.
- Categorize your community within a growth/change matrix.
- Define your key issues.
- Relate the information developed to your objectives.
- Summarize and develop needs assessment, conclusions.

The following takes you through a preliminary needs assessment process step by step.

ESTABLISH YOUR TIME FRAME

Four periods need to be considered:

- outlook today;
- outlook over the short term (one year);
- outlook over the medium term (three to five years from now);
- long term outlook (up to 10 years from now).

In some instances, it may be appropriate to look at the more distant future.

ESTIMATE DEMAND FOR LIBRARY SERVICES

- This requires an assessment of **current demand** for library services, which is dependent, for example, on the size of the population, its age and ethnic composition, and other factors.
- It also requires an assessment of **future demand** for library services which depends on population growth trends and the aging of the population.

Several key questions need to be answered here: What kind of population is your library serving? This involves consideration of:

- the "market area" you are serving (i.e., do you serve an area beyond your municipal boundaries?). This market area may have several components in it, defined by such factors as: distance from the library; degree of competition from other libraries;
- rate of population growth in your market area (decline, stability or growth) and anticipated future population increases;
- in-migration to the community;
- aging of the resident population;
- ethnic groups in the community;
- income, education and occupational factors in the community;
- age and lifestyle groups in the community (e.g., singles, seniors);
- influence of services in the community (e.g. retail) on the use of the library;
- commuters;
- presence of other special-interest groups in the population (e.g., university students, influx of tourists in the summer).

What kinds of library services are demanded by the population? In addressing this question, consider the following:

- other leisure activities in the community (i.e., those that compete for the time of potential library users);
- demands from individuals and/or community groups;
- compliments and complaints from library users;
- differentials in terms of type of materials loaned out;
- rate of increase in library membership.

Sources of Demand Data
The six primary sources of data needed to answer the above questions are:

- municipal; Planning Dept.
- provincial statistics; Ministry of Citizenship and Culture and Ministry of Housing
- Canada census data;
- internal library reports, analyses, budgets, letters received;
- regional comparisons;
- bordering community comparisons.

The whole point of this stage of demand evaluation is to get information quickly and easily. The above should be enough to provide this.

ESTIMATE SUPPLY OF LIBRARY SERVICES

This requires an assessment of the current supply of library services. The questions include:

- political priority in your community for library services;
- trends in the budget of your facility or library board;
- comparative per capita or per household ratios for the following: budgets, staff, space, volumes held per capita, types of books held;
- supply of materials other than books (e.g., AV material, art reproductions);
- hours of operation.

Sources of Supply Data
You should be able to find most of the supply data you need from documents already in the library. However, these references may not adequately provide data on special service groups, especially not in the disabled person categories.

It probably will be necessary to estimate these through direct contact with representatives of these groups.

MATCH DEMAND AND SUPPLY

It is appropriate to begin by generating ratios regarding:

- circulation per staff;
- circulation per capita;
- reference requests per capita;
- service attendance per capita.

It is also a good idea to obtain answers to questions as to who the major users are, and what their profiles are (i.e., key market segments currently using the library):

- Age;
- Sex;
- Occupation;
- Family size;
- Community;
- Number working in family;
- When are the periods of peak use? What are the particular user groups that predominate at peak times?
- Who are the major non-user groups? Why are they non-users?

CATEGORIZE YOUR COMMUNITY

On the basis of the foregoing, identify your community in terms of:

- population growth (choose from among growth, stability, or decline);
- population change (decide whether or not there will be significant structural change in the type of population in your community).

Locate your community in the appropriate cell on Diagram Four. This is a growth/change matrix; that is, it divides communities into six different kinds, depending on the degree to which they are growing and the degree to which other changes are taking place (such as: aging of the population, significant change in ethnic mix, etc.).

DEFINE KEY ISSUES FACING THE LIBRARY IN YOUR COMMUNITY

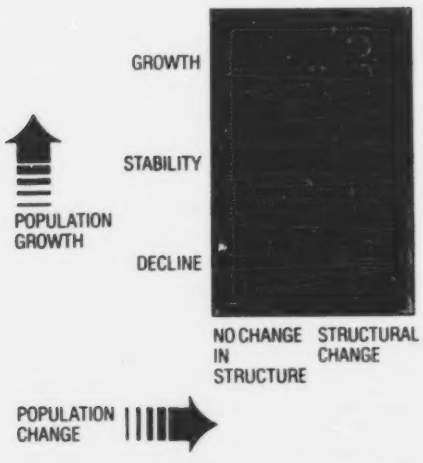
By now you will have categorized your community according to the growth/change matrix.

Take this categorization scheme (e.g., the letter 'C' refers to a community experiencing essentially no population growth, where no significant structural change is occurring in the population), and review the implications in terms of key issues likely affecting your future library planning, as shown on the situation analysis of community chart (Diagram Five see page nine). This chart indicates the degree to which a number of common issues may affect you.

For each of the key issues mentioned in the chart (which may or may not be a concern in your community), consider the following (bearing in mind the goals and objectives of your library as you work through these issues):

Diagram 4

GROWTH CHANGE MATRIX



General Issues:

- What range of services should be provided by the library?
- What services can be provided uniquely by the library?
- What is the role/opportunity of automated systems? of direct electronic access by library patrons to reference material? of regional or co-operative data bases?
- How should pressure for non-book materials be handled? video, film, cassettes, diskettes, non-electronic (children's toys, puzzles), computers and computer software;
- To what extent is your library educationally oriented and/or leisure-reading oriented?

"More with Less"

- Are there ways in which you can reduce current costs through better utilization of materials, reduced services provision?
- Can you utilize volunteer time and/or resources in providing services, to reduce costs?
- Within the scope of the Ontario Public Libraries Act 1984, are there ways in which you can charge for certain services?

Review Existing Service Effectiveness

- What current services are being offered by the library? What does it cost to offer these?
- Who uses or participates in these services? What benefit do these users receive?
- What is the cost per user of these various services? How do the services rank relative to one another?
- Which services are least cost-effective? Can they be dropped from the repertoire of services provided by the library? If not, why? (**Note:** cost effectiveness is not the only reason for providing a service, especially to special groups. In some cases, assistance from Project Grants help.)

Extend/Augment Existing Services

- To what extent should existing services be expanded? What additional population is expected in the community?
- Should existing services be offered at different times of the day?

Alter Hours of Opening

- Should there be different hours at different geographical locations? What should they be?

Develop New Services

- How is the structure of the population changing? Which new groups or market segments are becoming dominant in the community? What is their need for library facilities and services?
- Which groups of non-library users are there in the community? Why are they non-users? Are there no books for certain groups? Are the facilities inaccessible for some groups? Should the library try to convert them to users? If so, what approaches might work?
- What type of new services should be offered? How do these fit in with your goals and objectives?
- What is the anticipated usage for these new services?
- What is the cost effectiveness of these new services? How do they relate to the cost-effectiveness of existing services?

Increase Service Points in the Community

- Where is population growth occurring? Where will the key population concentrations be?
- When will additional service points be required in that location (if at all)?
- What interim provision might be put in place (i.e., bookmobiles, temporary storefront locations)?

Additional Staff

- How does the need for additional staff relate to new services being developed, or the extension of existing services being provided?
- What particular skills, background and experience should new staff possess (in light of the requirements of these new services)?
- How will funding for new staff be secured?

Promotion of Library Service

- Which target segments in the population are currently non-users, or perhaps infrequent users, of library services?
- Which message(s) should be directed at these target segments (i.e., relating to either existing or new services)?
- What appropriate ways should be utilized in communicating to these target segments?
- What resource should be allocated to this communications service?
- Is the use of your library cyclical or counter cyclical based on economic circumstances? (i.e., does your library usage go up when the economy goes down, thus being counter cyclical.)

Groups to be Surveyed

What need do you have for services to:

- the English language community?
- the French language community?
- ethnic groups?
- native groups?
- the disabled?
- the illiterate?

Determine Balance in Regard to Established, Defined Groups

How is the supply/demand balance of services to:

- children?
- teenagers?
- adults?
- senior citizens?
- business persons?
- students?

RELATE THE INFORMATION YOU HAVE DEVELOPED TO YOUR OBJECTIVES

In light of the foregoing, assess the goals and objectives of the library considering:

- appeal to different groups in the community;
- provision of materials in addition to books;
- objectives regarding cost effectiveness;
- ways in which library services are promoted to the public;
- attempts to reach current non-users.

How widely-known are the goals and objectives?
Consider the following:

- Is there general agreement among librarians and other staff members as to what are your goals and objectives?
- Are these goals and objectives written down in such a form as to be accessible to the staff and public? Are they clear and simple?

How appropriate are the goals and objectives in light of the foregoing assessment of demand and supply?

SUMMARIZE YOUR OVERVIEW OF NEEDS CONCLUSIONS

- How broad, open-ended, are the existing goals and objectives?
- How appropriate are they?
- What is the relationship to the Ontario Public Libraries Act, 1984?
- What new objectives/deletions to old objectives seem appropriate?
- What are the main areas of concern?
- What is the competitive environment in your community vis-a-vis leisure time?

Now that you have undertaken a preliminary overview of needs and you have some idea of the probable issues of importance facing your library, it is appropriate to proceed to a more detailed look at needs assessment techniques.

Diagram 5

SITUATION ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY

	CLASSIFICATION OF COMMUNITY					
KEY ISSUES	A	B	C	D	E	F
BUDGET PRESSURE TO DO "MORE WITH LESS"	PROBABLY NOT	PROBABLY NOT	PROBABLY	PROBABLY	YES	YES
NEED TO REVIEW EXISTING PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS	YES	YES	PROBABLY	PROBABLY	PROBABLY	PROBABLY
NEED TO EXTEND/ AUGMENT EXISTING SERVICES	YES	YES	MAYBE	MAYBE	PROBABLY NOT	PROBABLY NOT
NEED TO DEVELOP NEW SERVICES	PROBABLY	YES	MAYBE	YES	PROBABLY NOT	PROBABLY NOT
NEED TO DEVELOP MORE SERVICE POINTS FOR COMMUNITY	MAYBE	MAYBE	PROBABLY NOT	PROBABLY NOT	NO	NO
NEED FOR ADDITIONAL STAFF	YES	YES	PROBABLY NOT	PROBABLY NOT	NO	NO
NEED TO PROMOTE/ ADVERTISE LIBRARY SERVICES	PROBABLY	YES	MAYBE	PROBABLY	PROBABLY NOT	MAYBE

APPROACHING USER NEEDS ASSESSMENT

You must plan your overall needs assessment strategy in advance, if you are to receive maximum benefits from it. This includes choosing which tools you are going to use, and why, and understanding the probable range of outcomes, and their implication.

The three main things to think about in approaching needs assessment are:

- **purpose:** What is the reason you are undertaking this needs assessment?
- **objective:** What do you hope to achieve?
- **procedure:** What tools and resources are you going to use, and how will they interact with each other?

Resources should be planned carefully; they include staff-hours, money and time.

These are needed all the way through the process – for example, for analysis as well as for data gathering. Any extensive data collection will probably require computer coding, input and running time. It is most important to think through the total scope of the work to be done, the skills that are relevant, the number of hours that each person involved will have to put in and the outlay in dollars.

NOTE OBSTACLES IN STUDYING SPECIAL GROUPS

Make sure that you do not exclude some of the targetted groups such as the disabled. Most of the standard sources of data have little or no information on such groups. You will probably have to reach representative associations that deal with these groups.

OBSERVE PARTICULAR LIMITATION OF SURVEYS

It is entirely possible to do a useful needs assessment without conducting a survey. However, most library boards that carry out needs assessment find surveys useful. They are one of the most difficult techniques to use accurately, and their limitations must be understood.

Surveys **must** be pretested.

You are unlikely to be able to carry out a comprehensive community survey without a significant cost and in less than six to twelve months.

In particular, if you use a survey as the primary evidence to back up a viewpoint that is politically highly contentious, you should ensure that its results are statistically valid, that its distribution was truly random, that the demographics of the respondents properly represent the community, and that you can justify the wording of your questions.

DO NOT NORMALLY USE TOOLS IN ISOLATION

Do not use this guide book, and especially Chapter Six piecemeal, that is, do not use one tool in isolation, without counterbalancing any evidence it gives you with information obtained in other ways.

You must devise a methodology to capture information so that information from one source is corroborated by information obtained by another method.

USE METHODS WITH WHICH YOU ARE COMFORTABLE

Users of a needs assessment process should take into account their own personal styles, energies and strengths. They may feel more at home in using some needs assessment tools than others; this is perfectly acceptable.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TRAINING AND EDUCATION FUNDING

The staff of the Ontario Library Services (OLS) are available to assist in the use of this manual; indeed, one of the roles of the OLS is to help libraries carry out needs assessments.

The OLS can also provide professional assistance and consultation, provision of OLS-wide sources of data, and assistance in comparative analysis between libraries of similar size and character.

INVOLVE THE PUBLIC

It is essential to have the participation of the public in testing, reading, analysing and responding to the conclusions of the needs assessment process. This should include:

- the use of the media to inform the public that a needs assessment project is under way, and to give a phone number and address that any member of the public can use to contact those carrying out the assessment;
- one or more public meetings to discuss the conclusions of the needs assessment, and particularly the results of any survey/questionnaires;
- open invitations to the public to let their views be known;
- care in involving representatives from the targetted service groups.

6 TECHNIQUES FOR GATHERING DATA

The process begins with staff contact and board contact, then proceeds to reports that are on hand, and library in-house statistics.

It then looks further afield for existing data from provincial, regional and municipal sources.

Finally, numerous ways of generating new data are suggested.

PLANNING SESSIONS WITH STAFF

Staff can give a first impression of trends in service needs. The circulation desk staff usually knows what materials are going in and out, and what kinds of people are borrowing them. The reference staff knows what subjects are of interest.

Staff discussions and meetings can thus help define most of the major issues and suggest the tools to be used to resolve them. The focus in these meetings is likely to be on current, short and medium-term concerns (that is, now, one year ahead and three to five years ahead). The outcome can be a list of issues and a list of possible investigations to be made.

Staff meet for a preplanned discussion. There should be a draft agenda, with specific time limits. A designated person should solicit ideas from the staff for agenda items. It is also useful to open the meeting with a discussion of the draft agenda, and to be open to modifications. Setting tentative times for discussing each item helps keep a flow to the meeting.

The meeting may be led by the chief librarian, or it may be chaired by a member of the staff, with the chief librarian taking a low-key role. It is useful to have a secretary to keep notes of ideas that come up or of conclusions that are reached.

Such meetings are best when they do not run for more than an hour and a half without a clear coffee break, and do not run for more than three and a half hours without a break of an hour or more. It is not normally productive to try to work through by bringing lunch in and continuing to work during lunch.

DO

- seek open lines of communication among staff.
- have periodic internal staff meetings.
- make sure that at least some of these meetings are wide ranging and allow staff to explore imaginative possibilities.
- encourage everyone to be involved and express opinions.
- create a relaxed comfortable atmosphere.
- encourage everyone to think in imaginative, creative, unusual directions.
- encourage concrete images, words, descriptions; do be specific.
- bring the session to a close on time with a summing up.
- have someone present who can stimulate the discussion from time to time (if necessary) by suggesting new concepts for consideration.

DON'T

- let the session get too sidetracked on one particular idea.
- assume that all the opinions and information offered are solid enough to be translated into service changes without more substantive checking.

Example

A small town library was concerned that it was not providing sufficient services to students; they were going to a nearby city for their materials. A suggestion made at a staff meeting led to a meeting between the member of the library staff and representatives of several local high schools. As a result, the schools put on displays of local library material that was relevant to the courses the students were taking.

Example

The staff of a small town library was concerned that staff members had very little opportunity for children's programming. A suggestion made at a staff meeting led to the participation of the entire staff during one full week—spring break. Each year, various themes were used to transform the library into: "a vacation in space"; "tropical islands"; "a jungle"; and even "through the looking glass".
The participation of the entire staff in programming led to a much greater impact on the community.

PLANNING SESSIONS WITH TRUSTEES

Library trustees often have business, social and political connections that provide links to the larger community. A special meeting should be called from time to time to take advantage of this wider perspective.

Several devices can be used to shape the session. One is to cast its members in a role; to ask them, for example to think of themselves as members of the municipal council over the long term. What will then be the decisions facing the municipality, and what will the role and needs of the library be?

Another way of handling the session is to ask trustees to imagine that they are entering the library in twenty years time. What will they see around them? What will people be doing? What kinds of staff, materials, services, facilities, environments will there be?

See the previous comments under "planning sessions with staff".

DO

- make sure that the entire board is involved.

INTERNAL LIBRARY REPORTS AND STATISTICS

Without question, the best starting point for both quantitative and qualitative information is represented by the reports that already exist within the library itself. These include:

- the library budget, prepared for the municipality;
- basic library statistics (as reported to the Ministry);
- back-up data developed when preparing the returns for the Annual Survey of Public Libraries;
- internal library analyses and reports;
- lottery-based grants applications (for special services and equipment);
- information on space and collections;
- working, planning and operating files;
- correspondence;
- maps and official plans;
- culture and recreation master plan or equivalent;
- surveys of the library lot and adjacent parklands (if any);
- landscape plans;
- building design plans;
- B.I.A. (business improvement area) studies;
- chamber of commerce market studies, advertising plans.

Most of the information needed for the overview, discussed earlier, should be already available in internal library statistics.

This data may well suggest other issues needing further investigation; a careful review is also likely to show gaps and suggest ways of altering the way the data is kept in the future so that it can yield the maximum useful information with the minimum of effort.

DO

- develop a format for keeping internal data that is most useful to you; follow trends over several years.

DON'T

- rely solely on this; add to it with Ministry comparative statistics available from Libraries and Community Information Branch, Ministry of Citizenship and Culture.

Example

On reviewing the files over the past three years, a library found that changing demographics had produced a steadily growing number of requests for current affairs information from a relatively newly arrived cultural group. The library was able to improve its service considerably by providing newspapers of interest to this group.

Example

A chief librarian had recently been appointed to a library system serving a population of over 80,000. By showing the circulation of each branch and also of the central library over the previous five years, and by correlating the allocation of materials expenditure for five years, she presented to her board a concise and factual report suggesting the inadequacy of resources in two branches. The library board concurred with her new budget plan, which increased equality of service by increasing the size of the two branches and by adding additional shelving and enlarging the size of the collection.

INTERNAL LIBRARY STATISTICS – UNIT COSTS

Unit costs are very helpful in analysing whether or not a particular service represents good value for resources.

Unit costs can be developed in a number of different ways, including but not limited to:

- unit cost per service;
- unit cost per hardcover book;
- unit cost per paperback;
- unit cost per capita;
- unit cost per user;
- unit cost per transaction.

Although the appropriate measure varies with what you are talking about, **unit cost per transaction** is usually the best measure.

Most library functions can be broken down into unit costs by dividing the total line expenditure by the total frequency. If the total frequency is unavailable, then a sampling procedure is required.

DO

- use graphs or charts whenever possible in the presentation of statistics.
- take some time to experiment with unit cost breakdowns for selected activities that are of interest to you.

Example

One library found that reference request cost/transaction was very high, also that reference materials unit cost/utilization was very high.

The questions were then posed: Is reference a service the community needs? Are any other community services providing this need? Can the library provide this service better than other resources?

It was concluded that, on a per-unit-cost basis, this service was certainly relatively expensive, but that it was necessary because the library provided the most comprehensive information resource in the community.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND CULTURE STATISTICS

The Ontario Public Libraries Statistics prepared by the Ministry on an annual basis, are a wealth of useful information; they enable any library to compare its operating and capital statistics to those of other libraries in Ontario of a similar size and type in regard to a host of categories of data. Note, however, that they have limited use in terms of services for disabled people.

For each appropriate statistic, examine the median of your population category, and also note the range of the statistic. If the range is extremely large, you should avoid using the mean as an analytical number; it can be misleading if the range is wide, in that it will be unduly weighted by a few very large numbers. In nearly all situations, the median is a more useful number.

Use the following comparisons:

- hours open per service point;
- titles held per capita;
- volumes per title;
- circulation per capita;
- circulation per dollar spent;
- library use per dollar spent;
- total staff per 10,000 population;
- provincial grant as a percentage of total revenue;
- local support per capita;
- local support per household;
- salaries exenditure as a percent of total expenditure;
- materials expenditure per capita.

All the information on data is worth examining; however, caution should be used when presenting these statistics to library boards or councils. It is very common in such presentations for there to be searching questions as to statistical comparisons, methodology and sample sizes, and there is a risk that argumentative discussions polarize individuals uncomfortable with statistics.

"HOW DO YOU COMPARE?" STATISTICS

Particularly well worth pursuing is the publication "How Do You Compare?", put out annually by the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture. It provides information on a comparative basis as to the level of local support for public libraries.

In regard to using the Ontario Public Libraries Statistics provided annually by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture:

DO

- use the indices of comparison.
- use the "median" as your reference figure, rather than the "mean".
- also look at the "upper quartile" and the "lower quartile" to get an idea of the degree to which you tend to be above or below the median.
- consult the "range".
- carefully examine your library system within your population category and compare with previous years.
- use the statistical summary for internal management exercises, i.e., unit cost analysis, performance measurement, changing resource allocation.

DON'T

- use statistics indiscriminately.
- worry about the "standard deviation" or the "mean".

Note: definitions of the above terms are as follows:

Mean: the arithmetic average of all statistics of this type.

Median: the point at which 50 percent of libraries are above and 50 percent are below.

Upper quartile: the point at which 25 percent of libraries are above and 75 percent are below.

Lower quartile: the point at which 75 percent of libraries are above and 25 percent are below.

Range: the gap between the number for the smallest library and the number for the largest library.

Example

A board trustee questioned the reference requests per staff for his library system; he was concerned that the number was considerably lower than the median for the population category. The chief librarian cautioned that isolating one statistic such as this one was not particularly useful in determining the overall health of the library. She pointed out that library use per capita was a much more valuable statistic, and that their library compared very well on that basis.

MUNICIPAL DATA/CENSUS DATA AND OTHER GOVERNMENT STATISTICS

All municipalities generate a substantial amount of information, both as a general record of services and activities in the community and through more formal planning exercises connected with the annual budgeting process and long range planning or project planning.

This data usually includes:

- information on the demographics of the community; of the region; of the country;
- information on projected trends in the demographics e.g., the aging of the population, or the influx of young families, or changes in the relative proportion of ethnic groups. (If the municipality does not have such data, you may have to search for it. If your data is very poor, surveys can be of excellent value. Other sources in the community, such as real estate agents, are often most knowledgeable in regard to changing demographic patterns.);
- information on the range of cultural, social and recreational services in the community, provided both by government, by non-profit groups and commercially. (e.g., what do the "Y", the parks and rec. departments, the local theatre, music and dance groups provide? How good are the local book stores and what is their demand pattern?);

- the commercial activity in films, computers, video;
- official plans;
- planning studies (primary and secondary plans);
- municipal council reports, studies and minutes;
- local health and social service groups (in regard to the disabled);
- housing and demographic studies;
- organization studies and plans.

Other important sources for this kind of data are:

- the Department of Municipal Affairs of the Government of Ontario;
- the Canada Census data.

The demographic data will provide an excellent insight into parts of the community that are now being well served, and those that are not being satisfactorily served.

Demographic trends will suggest components of the population that may need more or less service in the future, relative to their needs today.

Comparison with other services in the community may suggest services that can be dropped by the library, and also services that the library might consider initiating because no one else is providing them.

DO

- understand current demographics and trends.
- know what other providers of services are doing in the community.

DON'T

- assume that library services have to match demographic patterns exactly (some components of the community want service more than others).
- assume that past statistics are necessarily collected on the same basis as recent statistics, or that everyone reports them the same way.

Example

One medium-sized public library incorporated both an art gallery and a theatre in its building. An appraisal of existing and planned other services in the community led it to phase out the use of the theatre, but to develop plans to increase the role of the art gallery.

DATA FROM OTHER SPECIFIC LIBRARIES

In many instances, it is appropriate to select a few – two to four – specific libraries of a similar size, and existing in a similar demographic background – as benchmarks against which ideas for your community can be developed. It is also useful to know what is going on in libraries in immediately adjacent, bordering communities, since there is often an overlapping public utilization, and sometimes corresponding funding issues.

Using the Ontario Public Library Statistics, choose two to four other library systems within the same population range as your community and with as similar demographics as possible, based on an analysis of your municipality.

Note the similarities and differences between key characteristics.

Identify the library systems in all communities bordering on your community; carry out a similar comparative statistics exercise.

DO

- note major differences between you and comparative communities.
- seek explanations of these differences where such explanations can be developed easily.
- investigate whether differences are increasing or decreasing.
- note differences in the quality of data, and the possibility that different communities may use different data collection methods.

DON'T

- assume that your community should be the same as others.
- ignore the impact of community traditions and trends, the role and location of library facilities.
- make plans for altered services or facilities based solely on comparison with other communities.

Example

A library system discovered that it had a much larger record collection than comparable communities. On investigation, it determined that the collection was one of the most popular services in the library, that users were satisfied with the current level of service, and that it was, if anything, desirable to increase the size of the collection.

DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMUNITY INFORMATION DIRECTORY OF WHAT EXISTS IN YOUR MUNICIPALITY

It is often useful for the library board to have an accurate picture of the services offered in the community by municipal agencies, non-profit organizations, retail and corporate business. This will give it a perspective of the degree to which its present and/or potential services overlap with those of other providers.

Usually, the local chamber of commerce will have all or most of the information.

If sufficient information has not already been obtained by methods just discussed, it may be appropriate to send a survey to all local commercial and non-commercial providers of cultural, social and recreational services. In communities that have community information centres, this may already exist. Such a survey is likely to be of great interest to many elements of the community (and its achievement should stand the library in good stead).

Start by making sure that you have a complete list of government, non-profit and relevant commercial service-providing organizations. The municipality should be able to help with compiling this community information directory; or a staff, trustee or focus group meeting may help.

Before you begin to collect information, develop a format whereby it can be assembled on a comparative basis.

DO

- make sure you have exhausted other data retrieval means before undertaking the survey.
- then contact retail chains and/or corporate business people to ensure all marketing studies are known to you.
- make sure that you explain very carefully to those being surveyed why you need the data (to plan better allocation of library resources).
- dispel any fears that you may be seeking to compete with other service providers.
- share the results of the survey with those who have contributed to it.

DON'T

- undertake the process without reassuring contributors of data that the directory is to be available to all and a benefit to all.

Example

A library system discovered, through conducting a municipal survey, that there was an acute shortage of meeting rooms in the community. It also found that its organization of a film club had become largely redundant, since a better one had sprung up in a local church auditorium. It was able to re-allocate space and time used by its film series to meetings of other groups.

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

An interview is a way of keeping in touch with key individuals and groups who are important to the library.

Direct discussions with individuals convey information that sometimes can be gained in no other way. Even though focus groups, workshops, seminars and conferences also offer the opportunity for individual input, a personal interview can represent confidentiality and therefore the potential of complete frankness.

They are an excellent way to reach special groups.

An interview service is a very good way to begin a formal needs assessment process. Brief interviews (perhaps 20 minutes each) might be held with 20 or 30 key individuals in the community, to find out their general attitude to the library and what the library does.

Another way of using interviews is to initiate a less comprehensive interview service peri-

odically, just to keep a check on public attitudes and expectations.

Who Should Do the Interviewing?
The art of interviewing is not a skill everyone has. However, such skills can be developed; the basic principles are that:

- the interview needs to be organized specifically and clearly, so that it is convenient to everyone concerned;
- a comfortable, private space is important;
- neither interviewer nor interviewee should be interrupted by messages or phone calls; they should be able to give full attention to each other for the duration of the interview;
- the interviewer should be a good listener and have an open mind;
- the more neutral the interviewer is perceived to be, the more useful the interview remarks are likely to be.

Interview Guides
Different people have different styles; some like to follow interview guides meticulously, others prefer a more open-ended approach to an interview.

However, it is always useful to develop an interview guide with prepared questions in a set order; it helps the interviewer clarify his or her thinking, and provides a checkpoint after the interview. An interview guide is similar to a survey-questionnaire form. The big difference is that more complex questions can be raised. The design of survey-questionnaire forms is discussed later in this manual.

DO

- relax, and help the interviewee relax.
- be open to any subjects the interviewee wants to raise.
- make sure that you touch on all the issues of concern to you during the interview.
- use an interview to probe more deeply into issues developed in other interviews, focus groups, surveys.

DON'T

- quote other interviewees directly, unless you are certain you have their approval.

Example

To begin a full needs assessment study, a meeting room at city hall was booked for three days, and interviews were set up with 40 leading citizens, each for a 20-minute period. This gave the interviewer an excellent insight into needs and issues, and also enabled those being interviewed to make invaluable comments on options and possibilities, as well as making them feel important to the library.

NETWORKING

Nothing can be of more value than the personal contacts you have in your community. It helps if you are on a first-name basis with the key leaders in the community, those who have the greatest actual or potential influence on decisions affecting the library, or who are actually or potentially most involved in the library. These might include: the head of municipal government; all councillors and aldermen; fundraising chairpersons for various groups; service clubs; representatives of special groups; sororities; the chamber of commerce; the business improvement area executive; public and separate school board principals and trustees; municipal department heads. It is often not just organization heads that are the key; sometimes more junior employees have influence and information that other people do not have.

The way a needs assessment is approached will vary greatly depending on the degree to which the library has networked effectively in the community.

If such networking has been extensive, further networking can take place on a well informed and highly selective basis; if not, a needs assessment is a good time to touch bases as widely as possible.

The degree of formality of networking will also depend on past experience.

DO

- use networking to gain an appreciation of the attitudes of all elements of the community.
- extend openly to all those who can make a useful input.

DON'T

- use networking as a substitute for due process with staff, board, council.
- use networking to avoid or bypass serious issues that need to be faced more openly and directly.

Example

A library in a small community was faced with emergency needs for a variety of different kinds of space, due to some serious construction flaws discovered by the building inspector. Good relations with the "Y", the local high schools and the downtown business improvement association over the years meant that all the short-term space and equipment needs were quickly made available; in addition, a wide array of community forces quickly raised the money needed for the repair and retrofitting of the library.

SURVEYS

Surveys represent a process of asking a series of predetermined questions to a sufficient number of selected individuals so that the answers to the questions can be taken as representing the views of a much larger population.

The survey itself can be a short one – perhaps 10 questions that can be contained on a single page – or a comprehensive one, with dozens of questions contained on 10 or 20 pages. The questions can be simple – all "yes" or "no" – or they can require complex answers. Many different segments of the population can be the target of surveys. The most common differentiation is between users of the library and non-users, but surveys can also be aimed at a particular group, for example, children, or at local retail businesses or at seniors. The methods used to distribute a survey can also vary widely. They can be mailed (with or without a prepaid return envelope); they can be dropped off door-to-door; they can be handed out, and later collected, in the library. The ways in which survey data can be analysed are also numerous, from a simple listing of the percentages corresponding to each answer, to complex computer cross tabulations and variance analyses.

Ways of treating all these issues are discussed below. Despite the apparent difficulties and hazards associated with surveys, they are worth the investment, because they almost always give you a certain distance on a question, a sense of perspective, a chance to look in a fresh way at an issue you may otherwise be uncomfortably close to.

However, four essential cautions must be made.

CAUTION 1

The design of the survey document requires thorough, intelligent, painstaking work; and once the survey document is designed, it must be thoroughly pretested. The design of good survey documents is not an easy task for someone who has never done it before. Slight changes in the wording of questions, in the order of questions on a page, even in the graphic shaping of the text, can lead to significant differences in the answers given by respondents. And there are severe restrictions on the types of questions which can be meaningfully asked in a survey.

CAUTION 2

Never rely on a survey as the principal source of information on an issue; rather, use survey data to corroborate or challenge the results of interviews, public meetings, focus groups, and previously available statistics.

CAUTION 3 The way in which a survey is distributed and collected has an enormous influence on the answers given by respondents. The survey must go to appropriate respondents. They must be able to fill it out and return it without interference, and there must be enough respondents to represent a valid statistical sample.

CAUTION 4 Surveys can give you extremely valuable information. What you do with that information, however, is another matter, not necessarily self evident from the results of the survey. For example, constantly recurring questions are: "What about non-users? How does the study team bring them in? Are they in fact being kept away by inadequate services or facilities? Will surveys help the study team find out more about them?"

Surveys **can** help you reach "the silent majority". However, you have to think twice about the degree to which you should strive to convert them into library users. It is legitimate to try and motivate the unmotivated, to a degree; but some people do not want to be library users, and are never likely to want to be library users.

However, energy may well be spent establishing an understanding with those individuals that the library is an acceptable, friendly element of the community.

Many non-users of the library may well support the existence of the library without ever wanting to use it, and their attitude is valuable to the library, particularly when it presents its case to council.

IN-HOUSE SURVEYS

Current users of the library have to be, at all times, the library's first consideration, since they are the primary market for the library; they are its friends. An in-house survey can tell the library a great deal about nearly all aspects of operations and facilities.

This is **not** a total survey of the community; but it **is** a survey of that element of the community that is, by far, of most importance to the library.

The survey should be part of an overall undertaking, which may be aimed at answering either a broad series of questions or a few specific ones. Whichever is the case, you should decide, from the start what you wish to learn from the survey and what some of the hypothetical conclusions might be.

To do this, you will have to make an early decision as to what segment of the population you are going to survey, how large it is, and how many valid survey responses you will need to give answers that reflect to a reasonable degree the views of this segment. You will have to make sure that you can indeed reach your chosen segment. Such segments might include: children, seniors, young adults, library users, non-users, and more.

Before you begin to design a survey and arrange for its distribution, you have to establish certain requirements. How simple or complex will your survey be? How many copies will you need (sample size)? How will you distribute it, that is, how will you choose the individual recipients of the survey, how will they get the survey, and how will you get it back from them? What controls will you have on this critical process? Who will design the questionnaire? How will it be pretested? Who will analyse the results of the questionnaire, and how? (Will a computer be used?). What reports do you expect at the end of the process, and who will write them? And what resources do you have to do all this? What will be the time span of the process? What will be the cost?

Survey Design: General

You are now ready to start shaping your survey. You should begin the thinking of your survey as potentially having eight sequenced sections, though short surveys may not contain all of these.

These sections may be:

- Who the respondents are (basic demographic data);
- What the respondents are;
- What the library habits of the respondents are;
- What the respondents would like in the library;
- The attitude of the respondents to the library;
- The priorities of the respondents in regard to potential library services;
- The preparedness of respondents to pay (through taxes);
- General comments.

It is a good idea to take a look at successful questionnaires which others have used before beginning to design your own. See the sample survey #1 contained in Appendix B. It is perhaps as long and comprehensive a questionnaire as most communities would require. It was used in a small community that was experiencing growth in the context of considerable use of the retail and library services of neighbouring communities by its citizens. The library board suspected that it had a severe space problem, but wanted to put any information it could gain about this in a broad perspective. It contains typical questions which yield answers to all eight types of questions listed above. The questionnaire, however, is carefully tailored to the character of a particular community. If you base your questionnaire on one contained in the Appendix, or on some other successful questionnaire, make sure you examine every word of every question to ensure that you have made all the necessary changes.

Appendix B through F are examples of actual surveys that have been used.

DO

- avoid open-ended questions; that is, have all questions answerable by checking a box.
- indicate in the survey that the results are confidential; and thus do not ask the respondent to identify himself/herself.
- avoid questions that may embarrass some people, such as "What is your income?"
- in general, avoid asking highly personal questions.
- allow room for general comments at the end.
- try to keep the survey simple.

DON'T

- use surveys to get answers to controversial issues (and if you have to, ask the same question several times, with different wording, scattered through the survey).
- seek specific answers to your surveys; keep the questions general.

Survey Pretesting

It is absolutely essential that a survey be pretested. This is because (however well designed it is, and however closely based on successful questionnaires used elsewhere) human beings have remarkably idiosyncratic ways of reading the most extraordinary implications into questions. These idiosyncrasies are often unique to a community.

Example

One community interpreted a question about the degree of helpfulness of the library staff as a political attack on the library. The same question had been used without difficulty in other communities.

Thus, the survey should be tried on other staff members and, ideally, on general library patrons. This should uncover any questions, illogicalities, typographical and other mistakes, necessary classifications, and misinterpretations.

A quick analysis of a number of trial responses should also reveal whether or not there are gaps in the information coming from the questionnaire.

Sample Size

You have to decide the degree of confidence you wish to have in the results; this in turn depends on the over-all size of the group you are sampling.

Diagram Six indicates the minimum size of sample needed to represent the over-all group to a degree of confidence of 1 percent, 5 percent and 10 percent respectively. This table also assumes that the answers given by the sample are accurate within 5 percent.

The issue of sampling is further discussed in Appendix A.

Diagram 6

CALCULATION OF MINIMUM REQUIRED SAMPLE SIZE

Population Size	Confidence Level 1%	5%	10%
10	10	10	9
25	25	24	20
50	50	44	33
100	99	80	50
200	196	133	67
300	291	171	75
400	385	200	80
500	476	222	83
600	566	240	86
700	654	255	88
800	741	267	89
900	826	277	90
1,000	909	286	91
2,000	1,667	333	91
3,000	2,308	353	96
4,000	2,857	364	96
5,000	3,333	370	96
6,000	3,750	375	96
7,000	4,118	378	96
8,000	4,444	381	96
9,000	4,737	383	96
10,000	5,000	384	96
20,000	6,667	384	96
30,000	7,500	384	96
40,000	8,000	384	96
50,000	8,333	384	96
60,000	8,571	384	96
70,000	8,750	384	96
80,000	8,888	384	96
90,000	9,000	384	96
100,000	9,091	384	96
200,000	9,524	384	96
300,000	9,604	384	96
400,000	9,604	384	96
500,000	9,604	384	96

Definitions:

Population: number of people overall for whom data is needed.

Confidence level: number of responses needed to ensure that the data received represents the overall population accurately to within 1%, 5%, 10% probability.

Variation in sample results: the assumption is made that the results will be accurate within 5 percent.

SURVEY DESIGN SUMMARY: A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH TO YOUR OWN QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

Decide what general issues you want the survey to answer.

Write questions that you think should give you the answers you want.

Note the eight areas in which questions can be asked in the above material (survey design: general) and write questions you feel are appropriate. You can use questions in the sample surveys (see Appendix) as a guide if you wish, but note the cautions listed in this section.

Incorporate all your questions in an order that makes sense to you.

Try filling out your draft questionnaire yourself. Do the answers potentially tell you what you want to know? Are there gaps? Are some questions misleading? Are you told enough about what kind of person the respondent is? Modify your draft questionnaire appropriately.

Get your colleagues to review the draft. Have them act as a small group of respondents. Go

over their opinions and responses, and refine the questionnaire.

Try the questionnaire out on a small group of individuals from the intended group to be surveyed. Analyse both the responses they give and their reactions to the wording of the questions.

Finalize the questionnaire design.

Survey Distribution
Here are the two most important points to remember.

- Make sure you reach recipients on a truly random basis, and that the demographics of the returns match the demographics of the group you are trying to reach.
- Make sure you get enough returns to draw statistical conclusions.

You should begin by deciding the basic method of getting the survey to respondents. One way is to have library staff hand out questionnaires to patrons as they come into the library. A good idea is to choose several days on which the surveys are to be handed out – so as to gain information as to how usage and attitudes change between library users on different days or at different times. Make sure that the time and day each questionnaire is given out is marked on it. The person giving out the survey should follow a rule – such as giving it to every tenth entrant – which both preserves random distribution and is likely to yield the desired number of returns.

It is likely that respondents will ask why they are being asked to fill out the questionnaire, or they may have queries while they are filling it out. The person handing out the questionnaire should be able to answer both kinds of questions, but should be careful to do so in a non-leading way. Respondents should be encouraged to fill out and return the survey immediately.

It is important that all questionnaires given out be retrieved, for two reasons: the answers are needed, and also it is not a good idea to have loose copies of the questionnaire available without controls on distribution; it can create an impression of being unprofessional.

Survey Analysis
The most basic data from a survey consists of the absolute numbers and percentages of respondents corresponding to each possible answer to each question.

One problem that you will quickly encounter is that not everyone answers every question. The proper way to handle this is to record the percentages for each answer as relating to the base of the total number of questionnaires received back, and to therefore record the number of people who did not answer a particular question.

Example

> A study of responses from weekday and weekend users of the library indicated that weekend users had a considerably greater problem with library hours than did weekday users. A follow-up non-user study indicated that the library would become significantly more useful to the community if it began opening on Sundays.

GENERAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS

General household surveys are surveys aimed at the general population. They are particularly useful for obtaining the views of non-library users (or of a typical member of the community, who may or may not be a library user). Factors relating to their design and analysis are virtually the same as those for in-house surveys; the significant difference is that it is more difficult to define and reach a suitable sample.

It is also more difficult to ensure that the recipient of a survey fills it out and returns it.

How to Distribute Them
The best way to distribute questionnaires in a general household survey is by first class mail. Ways of obtaining a sample include choosing one or more names of individuals on each street name in the community (using a street address directory, which usually exists in most communities, and which can be located through the chamber of commerce, the better business bureau, the downtown improvement association or a similar commercial organization), or choosing names and addresses on a random basis. The use of bulk mail is not a good idea; you may find your surveys dumped somewhere rather than being delivered. The same problem may arise with hiring students or others to hand-deliver surveys.

To encourage recipients to fill out and send the survey back, it is valuable to:

- include a stamped, addressed return envelope;

- include a covering letter, on letterhead, signed by a well-known person such as the chairman of the library board or the chief librarian or the mayor, encouraging participation and explaining why.

Pretesting is even more important with mailed general household surveys, since the contact with the recipients is much more arms-length.

There are no certainties in terms of response rate; but if the mailing is well planned for and executed, you should have a minimum 25 percent response rate, and it may go as high as 70 percent. In any event, err on the side of sending out too many rather than too few surveys, so as to be sure to get enough returns to meet sample requirements.

Example

A non-user study revealed that significant groups within the community did not use the library because the research and reference staffs were not sufficiently accessible to the public, and because the circulation staff was unable to fill the gap. The library moved the research and reference desks close to the circulation area, arranged for some overlap between the two, and enjoyed a very substantial increase in reference requests.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

These can be useful cross-checks on mailed general household surveys; previously mentioned cautions, however, should be considered even more seriously, since the behaviour of the interviewer significantly influences the interview, as well as affecting who in a household is interviewed.

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups are a powerful way of developing a discussion of ideas in a way that is not possible in a survey, and involving a breadth of viewpoint that is not possible in a one-on-one interview. Focus groups involve bringing together a group of citizens – normally about nine to 12 – who represent all ages, both sexes, library users and non-users, a variety of educational, work and income backgrounds. They need to be led by someone with skill and experience in handling groups and chairing meetings. One way of using a carefully selected focus group is to ask those present to play roles; some kind of group exercise can help break the ice. Another is for the group arbitrarily to be assigned two sides of an issue, asked to develop the arguments for and against the issue, and then brought together as an open group again to reach conclusions. Focus group sessions are most useful when they are about an hour long.

Focus groups are a good technique to explore ideas such as: "What are 100 different things you can do with the buildings and services right now?" You can find out from people what they **know** about what is in their library. Sometimes, the perception of what exists is quite different from what is really there.

DON'T

- conduct a focus group if a significant number of expected participants have not turned up;
- turn the session into interviews.

Example

In one community, considerable controversy existed over library hours of opening. This was a difficult issue to resolve, since particular hours tended to cater to different types of library user.

The chief librarian organized a focus group of nine individuals, ranging from a teenage high school student who used the library for studying, to a senior citizen who came in once a week to renew a supply of books. The meeting was used to probe into why particular hours were attractive to particular users. As a result, a consensus was reached on new trial hours of opening.

WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS/ CONFERENCES

These are more extended ways of developing dialogue.

Workshops can be used as extended focus groups, although it is likely that the range of citizens represented will be somewhat narrower than for focus groups, since it places time and commitment demands on participants well beyond those needed for focus groups. One value is that detailed plans can

be developed for proposed services and facilities; experts can be brought in to augment resources; and there is the time to seek out information not immediately at hand in the workshop room and retrieve for use during the session.

Seminars represent group meetings directed and led by an expert, with perhaps more of the balance of input coming from the leader than from the group; in most other respects they are similar to workshops.

Conferences imply a structured assortment of events (including workshops and seminars) involving an appreciable number of people. They have use in needs assessment in that there are usually opportunities for contact between individuals regarding the exchange of ideas.

A workshop can be extremely valuable when a complex issue has to be resolved, such as: a decision to build a new facility; the siting of such a facility; a major change in internal layout; a major service addition or deletion. All those whose input is needed can be brought together; the workshop can be facilitated by previously prepared (and previously circulated) analysis papers.

DO

- make sure that everyone needed at the workshop is there, including those with expert advice and those whose opinion is needed.
- give individuals sufficient time and material to prepare for the workshop.
- ensure that all present have a chance to participate.

DON'T

- become swamped in jargon and technicalities.

Example

In one community, the issue of where a new library should be located became extremely contentious. A weekend workshop involving both professional consultants and citizens representing a wide range of viewpoints led to a choice of a site.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Public meetings can raise unexpected issues, provide indications of priorities, and can be a good forum for debate. Another value to public meetings is that they are a safety valve if they are properly advertised, which is desirable; they remove the risk of a citizen legitimately saying "I was never consulted."

DO

- publicize public meeting thoroughly.
- give an opportunity for everyone to be heard.
- make sure the disabled can attend.

DON'T

- use public meetings as plebiscites, that is, don't take votes, unless you have to.

Example

One public meeting, called to discuss the expansion plans of the library, revealed expertise in the community hitherto unknown to either the chief librarian or to members of the library board. Two members were found who were asked, and agreed, to sit on the building committee.

WHERE TO GO BEYOND THIS

So far, we have covered:

- the importance of needs assessment in public libraries;
- the relationship of needs assessment to the planning process;
- basic steps in a needs assessment;
- a preliminary needs assessment resulting in the development of key issues for detailed analysis;
- a description of techniques which may be used to gather the data that relates to the key issues.

You are now ready to begin a needs assessment study in your library. If any of the concepts or steps in the needs assessment process are unclear, contact your local Ontario Library Service.

CONSULTANTS

Libraries seeking to carry out a needs assessment for the first time often hire the services of a professional consultant with knowledge of the library community and of the skills and techniques involved. Funding is available from the province, through project grants to conduct needs assessments. Consultants can be of enormous value in establishing key issues and in assessing the merits of various strategies. They can save you time and resources, and they can make things happen much faster than would otherwise be the case. However, choosing a consultant is not easy. Very few consulting firms have the hands-on experience.

The Ministry of Citizenship and Culture has a guide to the use of consultants, which may be of use to you.

If possible, discuss your needs with two or three consulting firms and ask them for written proposals outlining how they can help you achieve your objectives, their qualifications, and the costs involved. Make sure that you are dealing with the individuals who will actually do the day-to-day work. Look for professionalism and reputation. Check with other clients of the consulting firms.

CONTACTS

The Ontario Library Service is your front line with regard to information sources and questions you may have as to methodology.

CONCLUSION

Needs assessment is an ongoing activity. Certainly it is necessary to carry out a concentrated needs assessment project from time to time. But the central purpose behind needs assessment is communication between the library and its public, and this means a continued flow of information between the two. Many of the tools described in this manual are general communications skills of value to everyone involved in the day-to-day operations of the library.
Good luck!

Major points to look for in a consultant are:

- a quick understanding of your objectives, and a willingness to learn about your board and your community;
- clear familiarity with libraries and with community interactions;
- knowledge of the sources of library funding;
- presentation of a crisp, clear proposal, which should include résumés of all personnel who will be involved in the project and a statement regarding the proposed role of each.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX [redacted] SURVEY/QUESTIONNAIRES

When planning a survey/questionnaire, it is important that you choose a sample that is the most appropriate size and type. If your sample is too small, then your results can be attacked on the grounds that they are not sufficiently representative of the population. This will be even more so if the range of answers to a question is broad. If, on the other hand, your sample size is too large, then you have spent time and money needlessly on collecting data that you do not require. Further, if your sample consists of a group of people whose characteristics are significantly different from those of the population at large, then, again, you can be accused of producing non-representative statistics.

If possible, make sure that persons who fall under the special services categories can fill out the survey. If not, ensure that their needs are assessed through interviews, focus groups and public meetings.

SAMPLE RESULTS

One of the first things you need to determine is how wide a range of variation you can tolerate in your sample results. Can you live with a result that tells you what you want to know within plus or minus 10 percent? Or do you need to be more specific, and be certain that the information is correct within a plus or minus 5 percent interval? Your needs might be very demanding, requiring results accurate within a plus or minus 1 percent interval. For most purposes, a plus or minus 5 percent interval is the acceptable norm.

Example

If you ask five individuals a question, the average of the answers you get will be less certain of representing the views of any one individual than if you ask 20 individuals the same question and calculate the average. That is, the influence of the answer of one individual will be much greater in a sample of five than it will be in a sample of 20.

REPRESENTATIVENESS OF THE GENERAL POPULATION

You need to decide the degree to which the results of the survey represent the community. Do you need to be 100 percent certain? If so, you would have to interview everybody, which would be a formidable task in a community of 50,000. Can you get by being only 95 percent certain that the sample represents the general population? Is 90 percent confidence tolerable? For most purposes, 95 percent is an acceptable norm.

Example

If you ask 10 individuals in a population of 1,000 what they think, their averaged answers will be far less representative of the total population than if you took the averaged answers from 100 individuals.

Once you have thought out these factors, it is possible to calculate the sample size you require using a relatively complex mathematical formula. Diagram Seven in the manual indicates the sample size required for different levels of confidence in the sample data, for a 95 percent representativeness of the community.

Note that as the population size increases, the required sample size decreases as a proportion of the population. This effect allows you to be statistically representative and accurate for large populations with relatively small sample sizes. For example, a sample size of about 400 permits accuracy to within plus or minus 5 percent, representing the parent population 95 percent of the time, for very large population sizes.

QUALITY OF THE SAMPLE

It is no use choosing a sample that appears to give you sufficient narrowness in the range of results, and sufficient quantitative representativeness of the general population, if in fact the kind of people you are sampling are not the same kind of people as the general population. You need to choose your sample so that it is random. If you do, it is very likely that your sample will have the characteristics of the general population. You should also build in questions that enable you to check whether or not you have been successful.

Example

If your survey is answered largely by teenagers, it is not likely to represent the views of a population whose composition has a much smaller percentage of teenagers than exists in the sample. The factors you should watch for will very much depend on the kinds of questions you are asking, and the impact that decisions made as a result of the survey will have on the population. The most common factors to watch out for are: age, sex, education level, home ownership versus tenancy, marital or equivalent living status, children living at home (and their ages).

WATCH OUT FOR BIAS!

"Bias" occurs when the sample you select does not truly represent the characteristics of the people you are surveying. This can seriously distort the results of your survey, and therefore the planning-related conclusions you draw from the data.

Below we indicate the major types of bias, and what you should be watching for to avoid getting into these "traps".

Non-Response Bias
Non-response bias occurs when the people who choose to answer your survey are different from the general population. For example, if you were doing a mail questionnaire, only avid library users might take the trouble to respond. This would give you a non-response bias, because you would have no information about the non-users. A better approach might be to do a telephone survey, where most people called, library users or not, will give you answers.

Selection Bias
This is another type of bias that may be encountered as a result of how you select people to respond to your survey. In the example above, only households with telephones were eligible to respond to the survey. If there were many households in the community without telephones, then clearly the survey would not be representative (it probably would not contain information about lower-income groups in the community). The classic example of this type of bias is the young man doing "man on the street interviews", who surveys only pretty young girls. You must design your survey to minimize selection bias.

Response Bias
This occurs when the respondent's answer and the "true" answers are not the same. For example, threatening or uncomfortable questions (e.g., about the respondent's income or age) can produce response bias. Also, if the questions are unclear or ambiguous, this type of bias can result. For example, the question "What is the length of your residence in Canada?", can produce answers like "25 feet" when really what you want to know is how long the person has been living in Canada. To minimize response bias, make sure that you pretest the questionnaire thoroughly.

NOTES ON SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRES

The following questionnaires are examples of surveys that have been tested and used in professional needs assessments.

The first, "library user questionnaire", may appear long, but in fact has proved to be a most effective over-all questionnaire in several communities, yielding a substantial range of useful information. It is an in-house survey, designed to be filled out by library users. Since it involves only checkmark responses (except for room at the end for general comments), it can be completed in two or three minutes. This is the kind of questionnaire that you might use in a full-fledged community needs assessment. You would be unlikely to seek this volume of information more than, say, once every five years.

The others are shorter questionnaires, designed to focus on a narrower range of issues or a narrower interest group. The first three of these are in-house surveys; the last is designed to be sent to a specialized mailing list.

These questionnaires are guides, not blueprints. They are intended as examples, illustrating some of the kinds of questions that may be useful to you. The wording of any particular question should be carefully modified to suit your requirements. The intent of many of the questions may not fit your circumstances. Issues that you have to face may not be addressed by any questions in the sample questionnaires. It would certainly be appropriate to develop short or long surveys focussed on particular ranges of issues or aimed at particular interest groups other than the ones shown here.

The only major difference between general community surveys and in-house surveys is that it is much harder to get respondents to fill out the surveys in the case of general community surveys. The design of the survey and the method of distribution have to be such that it is as easy as possible to fill out the survey and also that there is a sense of incentive to fill out and return the survey. In either case, it is essential to have enough responses to reach the required sample minimum.

APPENDIX

SURVEY SAMPLE #1 Library User Questionnaire: Trillium Public Library

The following is an example of a Needs Assessment questionnaire. Each community or situation is unique and will require its own approach. This survey is not recommended for general application.

Always start off your questionnaire with an invitation and an explanation of the reason for the questionnaire

DATE: _____

Will you please answer the following questions in order that the Trillium Public Library System may learn how it may be of greater service to you?

Questions that ask about who and what the respondents are

1. Do you live in:

- ☐ Trillium
- ☐ West Trillium
- ☐ Other

2. What is your age?

- ☐ 14 or under
- ☐ 15 to 19 years
- ☐ 20 to 24 years
- ☐ 25 to 34 years
- ☐ 35 to 64 years
- ☐ 65 years or over

3. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

4. What is your occupation?

- ☐ Salaried or self-employed person
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Homemaker
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Other

5. What is your household status?

- ☐ Single (living alone)
- ☐ Single (living with others)
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Other

Enter the appropriate language categories for your community in the next two questions

6. What languages do you speak at home?

- ☐ English
- ☐ French
- ☐ Other _____

7. What languages do you read at home?

- ☐ English
- ☐ French
- ☐ Other _____

8. How many years have you lived in the area?

- ☐ Less than 2 years
- ☐ 2 to 3 years
- ☐ 4 to 6 years
- ☐ 7 years or more

9. How many children do you have, that are 14 years or under?

- ☐ no children
- ☐ 1 child
- ☐ 2 children
- ☐ 3 children
- ☐ 4 or more children

10. What was your last completed education level?

- ☐ elementary
- ☐ high school
- ☐ community college
- ☐ university
- ☐ more than one degree

General community activities of your users

Enter the names of communities that might attract the spending dollars of your users

11. Where do you spend most of your dollars?

a) your grocery dollars?

- ☐ Trillium
- ☐ Excelsior
- ☐ Other

b) your non-grocery shopping dollars?

- ☐ Trillium
- ☐ Excelsior
- ☐ Other

Enter categories as appropriate

12. How often have you visited any of the following within the last year?

theatre	☐ over 5 times	☐ 1 to 5 times	☐ never
art	☐ over 5 times	☐ 1 to 5 times	☐ never
music concert	☐ over 5 times	☐ 1 to 5 times	☐ never
dance concert	☐ over 5 times	☐ 1 to 5 times	☐ never
other performing event	☐ over 5 times	☐ 1 to 5 times	☐ never
sports event	☐ over 5 times	☐ 1 to 5 times	☐ never

Library and library-related questions about the activities of your users

Note: List branches if you have more than one.

13. Do you use the Trillium Public Library?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Enter the names of any nearby libraries which might be visited by your users.

14. Do you use any of the following nearby libraries?

☐ Excelsior	☐ Avalon	☐ Camelot
☐ Valhalla Book Depot	☐ Nirvana	☐ Eden
☐ Brigadoon	☐ Paradise	☐ Other

15. Where did you get the books you last read?

☐ public library
☐ friend or relative
☐ bookstore
☐ book club
☐ supermarket, drugstore, airport rack
☐ don't know

16. During the past year, about how many books did you read?

☐ no books
☐ one to five books
☐ six to 10 books
☐ 11 to 20 books
☐ 21 to 50 books
☐ more than 50 books
☐ don't know

17. About how many times during the past year have you visited the public library?

☐ one to five times
☐ six to 10 times
☐ 11 to 20 times
☐ over 25 times
☐ never visit

18. (If you are married) About how many times in the past year has your husband or wife visited the library?

☐ one to five times
☐ six to 10 times
☐ 11 to 25 times
☐ over 25 times
☐ don't know
☐ spouse did not visit the library

19. Do you ever visit the library with your children?

☐ yes
☐ no
☐ do not have children

What ages are they?

☐ younger than 4
☐ 4 or 5
☐ 6 or 7
☐ 8 or 9
☐ 10 or 11
☐ 12
☐ 12 +

Add or subtract categories as appropriate

20. Please indicate which of the following services you used in the library in the last year?

Did you take out a book?

☐ yes ☐ no

Did you read newspapers or magazines?

☐ yes ☐ no

Did you take out records, tapes or films?

☐ yes ☐ no

Did you ever hear a speaker?

☐ yes ☐ no

Did you ever see a movie?

☐ yes ☐ no

Did you ever attend a special program?

☐ yes ☐ no

Did you take out a book in a language other than English?

☐ in French ☐ no ☐ other_____

Did you ever take a class?

☐ yes ☐ no

21. In the past year, have you contacted the library to get the answer to a question

☐ yes ☐ no

22. If you contacted the library to get the answer to a question, did you:

☐ call the library ☐ visit the library ☐ both call and visit the library

23. For what major purposes do you use library materials?

☐ recreational/leisure ☐ educational/vocational

24. During the past year have you read a book because of something you saw or heard on TV?

☐ yes ☐ no

Questions about the attitude of your users

25. In regard to transportation:

Would you say that your ability to obtain adequate transportation to and from the library:

☐ is not a problem?
☐ can sometimes be a problem?
☐ often limits my ability to use the library?

How far do you come?

☐ less than a five-minute walk
☐ less than a mile
☐ one to five miles
☐ more than 5 miles

Where do you normally come from?

☐ from home
☐ from work
☐ from school
☐ part of doing a number of errands (shopping)

How do you come?

☐ on foot
☐ by public transportation
☐ by car

This is an example of a particular-issue question.

26. Do you feel that the library can best serve the community as a stand-alone building or as part of a recreational complex?

☐ stand-alone building
☐ part of a recreational complex
☐ part of a cultural complex
☐ part of a multi-use complex
☐ part of a multi-use building
☐ part of a shopping mall

Questions about the preferences and priorities of your users.

27. In your opinion, which of the following community services benefits you most? (Please check as appropriate.)

	Priority 1	2	3	4	5
swimming pools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
arenas	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
parks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
libraries	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
sports fields	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
theatres	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

28. Please indicate whether you are satisfied or dissatisfied with the following services provided by your public library:

	satisfied	dissatisfed	doesn't apply	don't know
Help provided by library staff				
Hours the library is open				
Amount of time it takes to get information on books				
Ability of librarians to answer reference questions				
Number of copies of the popular books available				
Availability of the technical books wanted				
Study space in the library				
Degree of quiet in the library				
General amount of room in the library				

29. When you use a library, about how often would you say you get what you want?

- ☐ almost always get what I want
- ☐ usually get what I want
- ☐ never get what I want
- ☐ don't know

30. What additional services would you like?

- ☐ adult fiction
- ☐ adult non-fiction
- ☐ juvenile fiction
- ☐ juvenile non-fiction
- ☐ talking books
- ☐ books in large print
- ☐ books in French
- ☐ books in other language
- ☐ magazines and newspapers
- ☐ high interest/low vocabulary materials
- ☐ audio visual: ☐ cassettes ☐ video tapes ☐ film
- ☐ closed captioned videos and films
- ☐ other

31. Please indicate the periods of the day for library opening that would be most convenient for you (check as appropriate)

Time	10-12 a.m.	12-4 p.m.	4-6 p.m.	6-8 p.m.	8-9 p.m.	No specific time
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						
Saturday						
Sunday						

32. The following are some newer services that libraries are providing; please indicate whether you would use the service frequently, infrequently or not at all?

	frequently	infrequently	not at all
A computer that you can use to search for information or books you want			
A computer that you can play with			
People to provide information on the phone			
Books with large print			
Films, records and tapes for loan			
A class of special interest to you			
People to help you improve your reading skills			
Music listening area			
Video disks and video cassettes			

A question in regard to the user's preparedness to pay for further services

33. Now let's suppose that your local library needs additional funds to continue operations. Please indicate whether you would favour: *EITHER* Taxes being increased to cover the necessary costs *OR* The library not adding to the service that it offers the public (check as appropriate):

EITHER Taxes being increased to cover necessary costs:

- ☐ would favour
- ☐ would not favour
- ☐ don't know

OR The library not adding to the services it offers the public:

- ☐ would favour
- ☐ would not favour
- ☐ don't know

34. Do you have any other comments about the Trillium Public Library services?

(QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPED BY FOX JONES & ASSOCIATES)

APPENDIX

SAMPLE SURVEY #2 Children's Questionnaire: Trillium Public Library

The following is an example of a Needs Assessment questionnaire. Each community or situation is unique and will require its own approach. This survey is not recommended for general application.

This is an example of a questionnaire to be filled out by children visiting the library, with help if necessary.

DATE: _____

Please help us to improve our service to you by completing this form. Please tick the appropriate boxes.

1. Do you live in:

- ☐ Trillium
- ☐ West Trillium
- ☐ Other

2. What is your age?

- ☐ 4 or 5
- ☐ 6 or 7
- ☐ 8 or 9
- ☐ 10 or 11
- ☐ 12 or 13

Adjust the categories as appropriate.

3. How did you get to the library today?

- ☐ by car
- ☐ by public transportation: ☐ bus ☐ subway ☐ streetcar
- ☐ bicycle ☐ on foot

4. Did you come with an adult?

☐ yes ☐ no

5. Did you come with a friend?

☐ yes ☐ no

6. Did you come with a brother or sister?

☐ yes ☐ no

7. Did you meet a friend at the library?

☐ yes ☐ no

8. Does the library have the books you like to read?

☐ yes ☐ no

9. Does the library have other materials you want:

cassettes: yes ☐ no ☐
magazines: yes ☐ no ☐
toys: yes ☐ no ☐
other:

10. Did you get help from the librarian today?

☐ yes ☐ no

Adjust categories as appropriate.

11. What did you do at the library?

- ☐ read a book
- ☐ took out a book
- ☐ read a magazine
- ☐ took out a cassette
- ☐ was at story hour
- ☐ went to craft show
- ☐ went to a film show
- ☐ went to a special program (puppets, magicians, singers etc.)
- ☐ went for reference help: school project
- ☐ went for reference help: other (please specify)_____
- ☐ nothing in particular
- ☐ other (please specify)_____

APPENDIX

SAMPLE SURVEY #3 Special-Interest Questionnaire: Trillium Public Library Interest In Video Cassettes And Discs

The following is an example of a Needs Assessment questionnaire. Each community or situation is unique and will require its own approach. This survey is not recommended for general application.

DATE: _____

Please help us to improve our service to you by completing this form. Please tick the appropriate boxes.

1. Do you live in:

- ☐ Trillium
- ☐ West Trillium
- ☐ Other

2. What is your age?

- ☐ 14 or under
- ☐ 15 to 19
- ☐ 20 to 24
- ☐ 25 to 34
- ☐ 35 to 64
- ☐ 65 years or over

3. What is your gender?

☐ male ☐ female

4. What is your occupation?

- ☐ salaried or self-employed person
- ☐ student
- ☐ homemaker
- ☐ retired
- ☐ other (please specify)_____

5. How often do you use the library?

- ☐ more than once a week
- ☐ once a week
- ☐ every three weeks
- ☐ every two months
- ☐ seldom

6. Have you ever used video discs or cassettes?

☐ yes ☐ no

7. Have you ever borrowed video discs or cassettes from the library?

☐ yes ☐ no

8. Are you interested in the library acquiring more video discs or cassettes?

- ☐ strongly interested
- ☐ somewhat interested
- ☐ not interested

9. If you are interested in the library acquiring more video discs or cassettes, how would you see them funded:

- ☐ through an increase in the library budget (increased taxes)
- ☐ through funds taken from some other area

APPENDIX

SAMPLE SURVEY #4 Library Hours of Opening Questionnaire: Trillium Public Library

The following is an example of a Needs Assessment questionnaire. Each community or situation is unique and will require its own approach. This survey is not recommended for general application.

DATE: _____

Please help us to improve our service to you by completing this form. Please tick the appropriate boxes.

1. Do you live in:

- ☐ Trillium
- ☐ West Trillium
- ☐ Other

2. What is your age?

- ☐ 14 or under
- ☐ 15 to 19
- ☐ 20 to 24
- ☐ 25 to 34
- ☐ 35 to 64
- ☐ 65 years or over

3. What is your gender?

- ☐ male
- ☐ female

4. What is your occupation?

- ☐ salaried or self-employed person
- ☐ student
- ☐ homemaker
- ☐ retired
- ☐ other (please specify)_____

Ask a question about which branch, if necessary.

5. How often do you use the library?

- ☐ more than once a week
- ☐ once a week
- ☐ every 3 weeks
- ☐ every 2 months
- ☐ seldom

Alter as appropriate

6. What hours do you usually visit the library?

- ☐ 10-12 a.m.
- ☐ 12-4 p.m.
- ☐ 4-6 p.m.
- ☐ 6-8 p.m.
- ☐ 8-9 p.m.
- ☐ no specific hour

7. What days do you usually visit the library?

- ☐ Monday
- ☐ Tuesday
- ☐ Wednesday
- ☐ Thursday
- ☐ Friday
- ☐ Saturday
- ☐ Sunday
- ☐ No specific day

Alter as appropriate

8. What hours and days would you prefer to visit the library? (Please indicate order of preference (1) for first preference, (2) for second preference, etc.)

	8-10 a.m.	10-12 a.m.	12-4 p.m.	4-6 p.m.	6-8 p.m.	8-9 p.m.	no specific time
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							

APPENDIX

SAMPLE SURVEY #5 Community Groups Questionnaire: Trillium Public Library

The following is an example of a Needs Assessment questionnaire. Each community or situation is unique and will require its own approach. This survey is not recommended for general application.

This is an example of a questionnaire that might be used to develop more information on services available in your community.

DATE: _____

Will you please answer the following questions in order that the Trillium Library service may learn how it may be of greater service to your organization?

Name of Organization: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Person to contact for further information:

_____

What are the major purposes or goals of your group?

_____

_____

_____

_____

If you have a list of officers, general information and/or literature that describes your service, please enclose.

Alter the categories as appropriate.

1. In which of the following groups would you classify your organization?

(Check more than one if necessary)

- ☐ business
- ☐ cultural
- ☐ educational
- ☐ governmental
- ☐ health (mental)
- ☐ health (physical)
- ☐ information
- ☐ vocational counselling
- ☐ Other (please specify)
- ☐ political
- ☐ professional
- ☐ recreational
- ☐ religious
- ☐ service
- ☐ veterans
- ☐ vocational
- ☐ welfare

Alter the categories to fit your record-keeping.

2. What age groups do you serve?

- ☐ children (pre-school)
- ☐ children (school to 12 years)
- ☐ young adult (13-19 years)
- ☐ adult (20-60 years)
- ☐ adult (over 60 years of age)

3. Do you have a library in your organization?

☐ yes ☐ no

Alter the categories as appropriate.

4. Please check the library services you feel your organization would use. (Check as many as you wish – star those that you feel are most important.)

- ☐ help in setting up a library
- ☐ advice on organizing your collection
- ☐ collection of books and pamphlets for long-term loan
- ☐ materials for the handicapped
- ☐ materials for the disadvantaged
- ☐ materials in French
- ☐ materials in other languages: _____
- ☐ reference service
- ☐ shut-in service (individuals)

☐ shut-in service (nursing homes)
☐ use of special equipment that assists print-handicapped persons in utilizing existing equipment
☐ reading lists for office use
☐ list of community organizations (please specify)

_____

☐ photocopying
☐ reading lists for general distribution
☐ special exhibits
☐ talking book service
☐ film lending service
☐ loan of 16 mm projector
☐ loan of 8 mm projector
☐ opportunity to preview films
☐ loan of cassette players
☐ loan of cassettes
☐ loan of programmed texts
☐ information about materials for programs
☐ lists of speakers for programs
☐ meeting room
☐ workshop on program planning
☐ workshop on audio-visual services
☐ workshop on story telling and reading aloud
☐ workshop (other)
☐ community calendar of county-wide activities
☐ other service (please specify)

_____

5. Do you feel that it would be to our mutual advantage to explore ways in which your organization and the Trillium Library System might work together?

☐ yes ☐ no

Ontario

Ministry of
Culture and
Communications

Lily Munro
Minister

ISBN 0-7729-2649-2
D1809 7/87 1500